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CRITICISMS AND DISCUSSIONS.

THE BIBLE.

To the Editor of The Monist.

DEAR SIR :—I have received and read your article on the Bible. I am obliged to you for sending it to me, as it states so fully your views on the subject. I find that they are totally divergent from mine; in fact the chasm between us is so wide that I cannot attempt to bridge it. We disagree entirely on the most fundamental truths; and there is no common ground left from which to undertake the discussion of the case. I can say nothing that you have not already considered and deliberately rejected. Arguments which to my mind are clear and convincing have no weight with you, because you approach the subject with different prepossessions, and your primary principles are such as to exclude your acceptance of anything offered from my point of view. I must, therefore, respectfully decline your kind tender of the columns of *The Monist* for a communication from me on the subject.

Your philosophy is unintelligible to me. Your conception of God as an unconscious, impersonal (or as you prefer to say "superpersonal," whatever that may mean) norm moving and directing the universe in all its parts, instead of being the last result of scientific inquiry, is to my mind incapable of explaining anything. I cannot thus account for the existence of the universe or any of its multitudinous organic structures, or any of its endless adaptations, nor for animal life and especially that of man with its numberless manifestations. With my modes of thought I necessarily postulate a personal God infinite in his being and attributes, whose wisdom and power are displayed in his works, who has contrived and made all, and who guides and directs all to the accomplishment of His own glorious purposes. I then have no difficulty in conceiving that He may be pleased to reveal Himself to His intelligent creature man, and even after his alienation from his Maker by wilful transgression to institute measures for his recovery. And with this view I can understand how He might condescend to enter into intimate relations with one of the families of mankind to make it a nucleus from which influences may emanate over the rest of mankind. And I can imagine that in the act of establishing this relation in the first instance He, whose crowning work of grace is seen in the incarnation, might temporarily assume a human form and seal His covenant with Abraham

in a manner accordant with the usages of men, yet with a dignity which filled Abraham with awe as is shown in his humble but urgent and persevering petition on behalf of guilty Sodom. And I can see nothing derogatory in His arresting Moses on His way to Egypt by some means not particularly explained in the brief narrative—perhaps by a stroke of dangerous illness, the cause of which he understood—for no personal appearance of the Lord is spoken of; Moses was on his way to assume the leadership of Israel, and yet had neglected to have his son circumcised, which in that period, when worship was so largely symbolical, was the significant rite of initiation to membership in the people of God, the neglect of which was punishable with exclusion from the people. It was inadmissible that the leader and legislator of Israel should himself disregard one of its fundamental laws.

I can further conceive that in the early stages of religion, when it had not yet gained a firm foothold even among the chosen race themselves, and was in danger of being stifled by surrounding idolatry, measures of severity might be employed to put down and to eliminate corrupting influences, which are not permissible when it has gained more strength and can maintain itself in the midst of adverse surroundings. The Lord, who is the arbiter of life and death, who can devastate whole regions by earthquake and pestilence, by fire and flood, and none can question the righteousness of His dealings, even when we cannot understand their meaning, is competent to judge of crises occurring in a different age of the world, and in a totally different state of society, as we cannot in our imperfect knowledge of the situation. Men may execute a divine sentence, and so far forth be approved, and yet do it in a very improper way. The faults of good men, and especially of bad men recorded in the Bible, cast no discredit upon the Bible itself or its author.

Inspiration does not make the subjects of it omniscient; it guards them from error in declaring what is revealed to them. Paul knew by divine revelation that the Lord Jesus was to come again and that the dead were then to rise. But when that event would take place, he did not know, and did not pretend to say. The Lord Jesus tells us that this was known to God alone; and that he himself in his human nature did not know when it would take place. That the Apostle Paul should think that it might take place in his own life-time is not surprising. It might for all that he knew. And that the Lord Jesus might blend the destruction of Jerusalem with the great event in the end of the world which it prefigured is of the same nature with the appearance of the sun rising over the mountain tops which seem to be in contact with it. Our Lord's own words prevent us from imagining that he intended to reveal the time of his second coming, which he distinctly declares that in his human nature he did not know. The destruction of Jerusalem with its aggravating horrors took place in the lifetime of that generation which he was addressing. This was the pledge that gave assurance of all the rest. All was virtually accomplished when that pledge was fulfilled to the letter.

I know that all this means nothing to you. I have not said it with any expectation of convincing you. It is all waived aside by the philosophical principles with which you set out. I have merely wished to justify myself from my own point of view, and to show that I can consistently believe that the Bible is the revealed word of God, and as such is of untold importance to every living man.

W. HENRY GREEN.

The Pines, Caldwell, Lake George, N. Y., Sept. 18, '99.

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[This letter, which is a terse delineation of the old orthodox position, written by the most representative thinker of the Presbyterian Church in this country, sums up the traditional conception of the doctrine of inspiration in such a lucid and forcible form, and is at the same time pervaded by such a firm spirit of conviction, as to merit the consideration of all who wish to weigh both sides of the problem. It was written as a private communication, but the editor asked for and received permission to publish it in the columns of *The Monist* as a reply to the editorial article of the October number. Professor Green, however, wishes it distinctly understood that it does not contain the full argument which can be made for his attitude in the momentous question at issue. He does not undertake in these lines either to defend his own, or to refute the opposing, views of others, but is satisfied with a simple statement of his position.]

POTENTIAL THINGS.

In *The Monist* for January 1892, Dr. Paul Carus the Editor discusses the subject: "Are There Things In Themselves?" In the course of his arguments he refers to "potential existence and latent qualities," which he says "are fertile and useful ideas but we must beware not to employ them incorrectly."

But the fact is he has himself employed the term potential incorrectly, or in a manner that is misleading; and this has suggested the following criticism, and given rise to the remarks made and the arguments advanced on the subject of "Potential Things."

DEFECTIVE LOGIC.

The Doctor says: "We might express ourselves to the effect that the egg contains the potential existence of feathers, but with the same logic we might say the egg contains a potential chicken broth."

The defect in this statement consists in the misuse of the word potential. This word has definite meaning, as unmistakable as any word in the English language. But as here used it is wrested from its true and primary meaning and is employed in its secondary and broad sense which is ambiguous. It is here used as a synonym to and in the place of the word possible.